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U.S. Department of the Interior**

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## Yellowstone/Grand Teton News Release

### **Public Scoping Begins for Winter Use Plan and EIS for Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Memorial Parkway**

The National Park Service (NPS) announced that a Notice of Intent was published in the *Federal Register* on June 24, 2005, which begins public scoping for the long-term Winter Use Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Memorial Parkway. This long-term plan is expected to guide the management of winter use in the three parks and ensure that park visitors have a range of appropriate winter recreational opportunities, and that these recreational activities are in a suitable setting and do not impair or irreparably harm park resources or values.

Scoping is an opportunity early in a planning and EIS process for the public, organizations, and other agencies to suggest issues and alternatives that should be considered by the NPS in preparing the plan and EIS.

The EIS will consider a variety of different alternatives for managing winter use in the parks, including alternatives with various limits on the number of snowmobiles that may enter the parks, guiding requirements (including allowing some unguided or non-commercially snowmobile guided use), and allowing only mass-transit snowcoaches. In addition, the EIS will include alternatives with varying road segments left ungroomed for experimental purposes to address bison use of groomed roads. The EIS will evaluate the environmental effects of winter use on air quality and visibility, wildlife, natural soundscapes, employee and visitor health and safety, visitor experience, and socioeconomics.

A draft EIS is expected to be released in the spring of 2006 for public review. The NPS intends to complete the EIS process and issue new regulations (if necessary) prior to the start of the 2007-2008 winter season.

Currently, winter use in the parks is operating under a temporary winter use plan. The temporary plan is intended to be in effect for three winter seasons (through the winter of 2006-2007), while the NPS prepares this long-term winter plan. The temporary winter use plan allows for a maximum of 720 snowmobiles in Yellowstone each day. All recreational snowmobiles in Yellowstone must be led by commercial guides. In Grand Teton, 50 snowmobiles are allowed per day on both the Continental Divide Snowmobile Trail and the Grassy Lake Road, and 40 snowmobiles are allowed per day on Jackson Lake in order to provide access for ice fishing. With few exceptions, all snowmobiles are required to be "Best Available Technology," which are the cleanest and quietest commercial available snowmobiles. Snowcoaches are also permitted in Yellowstone and the Rockefeller Parkway and are

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required to have functioning emissions control equipment. Snowplanes are not allowed on Jackson Lake or elsewhere in the three parks.

Public scoping comments are being accepted **until midnight, September 1, 2005**. To be most useful, comments should be substantive, pertinent, and provide new information not available in earlier winter use planning processes. Respondents are being encouraged to submit their comments through the Internet at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>. To submit comments in this manner, select "Yellowstone National Park" from the drop down box and then follow the link for the winter use plan. Comments may also be mailed to: Winter Use Scoping, Yellowstone National Park, P.O. Box 168, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming 82190. Finally, comments may be hand-delivered to Yellowstone National Park headquarters in Mammoth Hot Springs, Wyoming. **Comments will not be accepted by fax, email, or in any other way than those specified above.**

A scoping brochure, and more information about winter use planning and visiting the parks in the winter, can be found at <http://www.nps.gov/yell/winteruse.htm>.

-[www.nps.gov/yell](http://www.nps.gov/yell)-